RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 23rd November, 2001/2 Agrahayana, 1923 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, **Mr. Chairman** *in the Chair.*

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Fixation of support price of Agricultural Products by States

*81. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to authorize the State Governments to fix the support price of Agricultural products which do not get the expected price and the loss suffered would be shared by the State Governments and the Central Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have allotted any amount to any State to sustain the loss;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether Government propose to allot any fund to Kerala for compensating the loss of Support Price; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) to (f) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) to (f) No, Sir. The Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of 25 major agricultural commodities are fixed by the Government of India only and are uniform throughout the country. The designated central nodal agencies are required to intervene in the market and undertake procurement operations in case the market prices fall below the MSPs fixed by the Government. The losses suffered by the designated central nodal agencies in undertaking the procurement operations are reimbursed by the Central Government.

The Government is also implementing Market Intervention Scheme

(MIS) for horticultural commodities and other minor agricultural crops, which are perishable in nature. The MIS is implemented for a particular commodity on the request of the State Government(s), which are ready to bear 50 per cent of the losses, (25% in the case of North-Eastern States), if any, in its implementation.

No funds are allotted by the Central Government to the State Governments under both the schemes of MSP & MIS.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Sir, the farming community in our country is facing a severe crisis due to the crash in the prices of agricultural products. Even in my State, Kerala 29 farmers have already committed suicide during the last three months. The prices have gone down considerably. For example, the price of copra was Rs. 45/- per kilo and it has come down to Rs. 18/-; the price of arecanut which was Rs. 165/- per kilo has come down to Rs. 28/-; the price of paddy which was Rs. 735/- per quintal has come down to Rs. 400/-; as for black pepper, the price has come down from Rs. 240/- to Rs. 67/-; as for ginger, it has come down from Rs. 15/- to Rs. 3.50/-; in the case of rubber, it has come down from Rs. 69 to Rs. 28. Sir, the support price mechanism has been evolved to save the farmers from the effect of such a crash in prices. But, in most of the cases, the Minimum Support Price evaluation or the market intervention is done and the declaration of the support price is made after eight or nine months or even one year. During that time, the prices of agricultural products, fertilisers, pesticides and even seeds and the labour cost will go up. In almost all the cases, the support price is not in terms of the reality or in accordance with the actual cost of production. So, the inordinate delay is causing much difficulty to the farmers in getting the actual price. Also, the procurement takes place after the season is over. Part (a) of my supplementary is whether this inordinate delay will be rectified by the Government and the support price will be declared in time and the products will be procured in time. Part (b) of my supplementary is this. The last paragraph of the answer states that no funds are allotted by the Central Government to the State Governments, under both the schemes of MSP and MIS. What is the reason for the non-allocation of funds to the States under these two schemes?

SHRI AJIT SINGH: The Minimum Support Prices are fixed by the Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, and I am not aware that they are fixed one year later. Khariff prices are declared before the Khariff procurement begins and the Rabi prices are declared before the Rabi crops come into the market. So, I do not understand how you are saying that the prices are announced one year later. And these prices are determined, based on the cost, based also on the incentives we want to give to a certain produce. As far as the allocation of funds is concerned, we do not allocate funds to the States. The FCI, or whatever the procurement agency is, pays the difference between the minimum cost and the costs incurred by the States. Under the decentralised scheme of procurement, three States are going to procure on their own. Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are procuring whatever crops are there under the MSP, and the FCI pays them the difference. Fund allocation is not there to the States, but it does not mean that we do not pay. The FCI pays it. The question was whether we allocate any funds.

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: My second supplementary is this. Declaration of the MSP for agricultural produce, without procurement of the produce in time, is of no use. The MSP for milling copra has been announced as Rs. 3300/- and that for ball copra, as Rs. 3550/-. But, in most of the cases, the NAFED, the procurement agency, is not willing to procure the copra in time. So many hurdles are there in the procurement of copra in time by the procurement agency, *i.e.*, the NAFED. So, I want to know whether the NAFED will be directed to procure the copra in time so as to save the farmers. That is part (a) of my second supplementary. Part (b) is this. During the visit of the hon. Prime Minister to Kumarakom in Kerala, he offered a package for Kerala in order to save the farmers. And a Coconut Technology Mission has been announced by him, and a draft proposal, which was submitted by the State Government of Kerala, through the Coconut Development Board, has been accepted. But it is alleged that it has been revised. Many demands made in the draft proposal have been denied. For example, the replacement of the existing diseased plants. That scheme has been taken out. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to when

the Coconut Technology Mission will be implemented. I would also like to know whether the proposals submitted by the State Government will be taken into account so that the offer of the Coconut Technology Mission, made by the hon. Prime Minister, will be satisfied.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Sir, as the hon. Member was saying, NAFED procures coconut through the State agencies. Coconut is a year-round product. So, NAFED has started the procurement now. In Kerala, we are facing some problems because, the High Court has put a ban on it in Kerala for the time being, and I hope, the hearing is going to be there tomorrow or day after tomorrow, and after that, NAFED should be able to start procuring copra in Kerala also. In other States, they have already started it. As far as the question of Coconut Technology Mission is concerned, in principle, they have arrived at an agreement. The Planning Commission has approved the scheme, and it will be implemented through the Coconut Development Board. So, it should be started very soon now and we are certainly in touch with the State Government of Kerala. Their views and the views of the other coconut-producting States will be taken into account. We are discussing this issue with them, we are consulting them, and since the Planning Commission, in principle, has approved it, we hope it will take effect very soon.

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Sir, the sufferings of the Peasants, agricultural workers and common man in Kerala is more severe, compared to other States. There are certain specific reasons for that. One of the most important reasons is that the agrarian economy of Kerala is more concentrated on cash crops. About 65 per cent of the agrarian economy is concentrated on cash crops. There is a very steep crash in prices of almost all crops. There is a steep decline in the price of the coconut oil to the tune of 45 per cent. The price-fall in respect of pepper is 53 per cent, the price fall in respect of coffee is 64 per cent, the price fall in respect of betelnut is 65 per cent, the price fall in respect of ginger is 41 per cent and the price fall in respect of tea is about 20 per cent, and there has also been a substantial decline in the price of rubber. So, this has very adversely affected the lives of their common people, the peasants, the

agricultural workers and the economy of Kerala. Not only that, Sir, Kerala is deficit in foodgrains production, and the price of foodgrains is increasing year by year. So, taking into consideration the special nature of the problems faced by the Peasants, agricultural workers and the common man in Kerala, would the Government take certain special steps to redress the sufferings of the people in Kerala?

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Sir, we are concerned about the sufferings of workers and consumers in Kerala. In other States also farmers are facing this problem of falling prices, almost in respect of every commodity, and Kerala, as you rightly pointed out, has cash crops, coconut and rubber. In fact, the problem is that rubber is not even considered an agricultural produce. We have taken up this issue with the W.T.O., and this year, there is a minimum price fixed for rubber, and since May 2001, the rubber prices are, in fact, going up slightly.

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: No, no. The rubber price is only Rs. 26/- today.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: They had fallen as low as Rs. 26/-. Now, they are around Rs. 30/- or a little bit more. Since May 2001, there is a little trend of showing up. We had a very steep decline before. So, these problems are there. The farmers are facing these problems everywhere, not only in India. International prices are also crashing. Especially, in respect of coffee, as he has said, the international prices have crashed very badly. We have the MSP system. There may be some problems with it, but, at least, we try to get the minimum prices to the farmers. Any more suggestions in that area are welcome.

श्री रमाशंकर कौशिक: उत्तर प्रदेश में भी धान की खरीद करवाइए।

श्री संजय निरुपम: सभापति जी, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय का ध्यान महाराष्ट्र के कपास के काश्तकारों की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहूंगा। हमारा जो विवाद है, हमारी जो चिंता है वह मिनिमम सपोर्ट प्राइस बढ़ाने की नहीं है। हमारा प्रश्न सिर्फ इतना है कि जो मिनिमम प्राइस तय हुआ है, उस प्राइस पर भी कपास की खरीदारी महाराष्ट्र में नहीं हो पा रही है। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना यह चाह रहा हूं कि इस समय महाराष्ट्र के काश्तकारों का क्या दुख है, इस बारे में केन्द्रीय सरकार ने कोई जानकारी हासिल करने की कोशिश की है? महाराष्ट्र में कपास के

काश्तकार आंदोलन कर रहे हैं। उनका कपास विदर्भ और मराठवाड़ा में जो खरीद केन्द्र है, वहां पर पड़ा हुआ है और सरकार द्वारा निर्धारित मूल्यों के बावजूद और खरीद केन्द्र वहां पर होने के बावजूद वहां पर कपास की खरीदारी नहीं हो पा रही है। किसान भूखे मर रहे हैं। पूरे देश में, अलग अलग राज्यों में जिस तरह से किसानों में आत्महत्या का ट्रेंड शुरू हुआ है, वह ट्रेंड महाराष्ट्र में कभी भी आ सकता है। उनकी दिवाली अंधेरे में गुजरी है। मेरी जो जानकारी है वह यह है कि केन्द्र सरकार ने 1875 रुपए के आसपास कपास के भाव निर्धारित किए थे लेकिन राज्य सरकार ने उससे ज्यादा भाव मिनिमम सपोर्ट प्राइस के रूप में निर्धारित किए हैं। लेकिन आज महाराष्ट्र के कपास के काश्तकारों को 1600 रुपए का भाव भी नहीं मिल रहा है। इसके पीछे सबसे बड़ा रीजन यह है कि कपास के अलग अलग ग्रेड कर दिए गए हैं और जो अच्छे ग्रेड का कपास है, उसको लोअर ग्रेड कपास के नाम पर 1600 रुपए से भी कम भाव मिल रहा है। इसलिए इसको केन्द्र सरकार सिर्फ राज्य सरकार का विषय कहकर टालने के बजाय यह बताए कि क्या महाराष्ट्र के विदर्भ और मराठवाड़ा के कपास के काश्तकारों के लिए केन्द्रीय सरकार के पास उनको राहत पहुंचाने के लिए तत्काल कोई योजना है?

श्री अजीत सिंह: माननीय सभापति जी, महाराष्ट्र स्टेट में मोनोपली प्रोक्योरमेंट स्कीम है। स्टेट जो है वह सारा काटन खरीदती है।

श्री संजय निरुपम: वह खरीद नहीं रहे हैं। मैं यह कहना चाहूंगा कि यह खरीद नहीं की जा रही है। उसके बाद क्या करना है?

श्री अजीत सिंह: हम महाराष्ट्र सरकार से कह सकते हैं कि यह उनकी स्कीम है। जैसा कि माननीय सदस्य ने कहा कि केन्द्रीय सरकार ने जो प्राइस फिक्स किए हैं, उससे ज्यादा प्राइस स्टेट गवर्नमेंट ने फिक्स किए हैं। वहां पर इसको खरीदने की स्कीम आज से नहीं बहुत पहले से है। लेकिन आप ने नहीं खरीद रहे हैं तो हम उनसे बात कर सकते हैं, उनका ध्यान इस तरफ आकर्षित कर सकते हैं। लेकिन यह स्कीम महाराष्ट्र सरकार की है।

श्री संजय निरुपम: मैं मंत्री महोदय को बताना चाहता हूं कि वहां की सरकार का यह कहना है कि उनके पास इस समय पैसा नहीं है, कपास खरीदने के लिए पैसा नहीं है। मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या केन्द्रीय सरकार महाराष्ट्र सरकार को कुछ आर्थिक मदद देगी ताकि कपास के जो उत्पादक हैं, उनको थोड़ी देर के लिए राहत मिल सके। अगर उनका कपास सरकार नहीं खरीद पाएगी तो मिडिल मैन खरीदने जायेंगे और सस्ते भाव पर खरीद लेंगे। तो कपास के काश्तकारों को इस तकलीफ से राहत देने के लिए सरकार क्या कोई राहत योजना बनाएगी?

श्री अजीत सिंह: कई प्रदेश सरकारों के सामने आज के दिन बहुत वित्तीय समस्यायें हैं। अगर कोई कैलामिटी डिजास्टर होता तो उसके लिए केन्द्र सरकार के पास नेशनल कैलामेटी

कंटिन्जेंसी फंड है। लेकिन काटन प्रोक्योरमेंट के लिए, जब सरकार ने अपने भाव तय किए हुए हैं, उसके लिए बात हो सकती है, फाइनेंस मिनिस्ट्री से बात हो सकती है। लेकिन कोई स्कीम ऐसी नहीं है, न इस तरह की कोई योजना है जिसके अन्तर्गत इस तरह की वित्तीय समस्याओं के लिए केन्द्रीय सरकार कोई समाधान करे।

SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Sir, the hon. Minister, in his reply, has stated that there will be a uniform system of minimum support prices throughout the country. In that respect, I want to put a question in relation to the North-Eastern States.

As far as the North-Eastern States are concerned, there is no proper infrastructure. There are no proper railways and airways. The National Highways are the only means for transporting the commodities. Over and above that, the North-Eastern States are almost deficit States. There is lack of proper exploitation of the production capacity. In the reply the hon. Minister has stated that the minimum support price is implemented for a particular commodity on the request of the State Governments which are ready to bear 50 per cent of the losses. But, in the case of North-Eastern States, it has been mentioned as 25 per cent. I can't understand why it is 25 per cent in the case of North-Eastern States, and 50 percent in the case of other States. Which are the 25 major agricultural commodities for which the minimum support price is fixed?

श्री अजीत सिंह: जो आपने 50 परसेंट या 25 परसेंट लॉस की बात की है तो वह एमआईएस, मार्केट इंटरवेंशन स्कीम है, कभी-कभी किसी कमोडिटी में स्टेट गवर्नमेंट अगर फील करेगी कि ओवर प्रोडक्शन है और प्रोड्यूसर को बहुत नुकसान होगा तो वह सैन्ट्रल गवर्नमेंट से कह सकती है कि और सैन्ट्रल गवर्नमेंट उसको जितना लॉस होगा उसका 50 परसेंट देगी। यह स्कीम कभी एपल के लिए शुरू की गई थी जो कि इस साल भी हिमाचल प्रदेश में है और अलग-अलग कमोडिटीज़ जैसे औरेंज वगैरह के लिए है। बाकी आपका सवाल है कि खाली 25 कमोडिटीज़ एमएसपी में हैं, तो यह हम रिव्यू करते रहते हैं और इस साल भी इसमें कमोडिटीज़ ऐड की जा रही हैं, जैसे कोकोनट ऐड किया गया है। जैसे ही जरूरत महसूस होती है और डिमांड होती है तो उसके अनुसार उसमें नई चीज़ें ऐड करते रहे हैं।

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: सभापति महोदय, यह बात तो सही है कि केन्द्र सरकार समय-समय पर मिनिमम सपोर्ट प्राइस तय करती रहती है और लगभग समय पर तय हो भी जाती है, लेकिन

सभी लोगों को प्रश्नों से मैं यह अनुभव कर रहा हूं कि मिनिमम सपोर्ट प्राइस तय होने के बावजूद किसान को उसकी पूरी कीमत इस आधार पर नहीं मिल पाती क्योंकि इस समय उत्पादन काफी ज्यादा हुआ है और ऐसा सब जगह जानकारी में भी आ रहा है। जैसे कि राजस्थान का मैं उदाहरण दूं तो वहां पर तीन साल तक लगातार अकाल की विभीषिका रही है और गए साल अच्छी बरसात हुई तो राजस्थान में बाजरा खूब उत्पादित हुआ। केन्द्र सरकार ने प्राइस भी तय कर दी, लेकिन इसके बावजूद बाजरे का 475/- रुपये भाव जो केन्द्र सरकार ने तय किया था वह किसान को न मिल करके, बाजार में किसान को बाजरा 300/- रुपये से भी कम दाम पर बेचने को मजबूर होना पड़ा। मैं इस संबंध में माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि सपोर्ट प्राइस तय हो जाने के बावजूद राज्य सरकार और केन्द्र सरकार के बीच हमारा राजस्थान प्रांत क्यों झूलता रहा? पहले राज्य सरकार को एक लाख टन खरीदने के लिए कहा गया, जबकि उत्पादन 20 लाख टन हुआ अर्थात् राज्य सरकार केन्द्र सरकार के माध्यम से एक लाख टन खरीदेगी, लेकिन बाद में फिर 3 लाख टन खरीदने के लिए कहा गया। मैं यह निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि इस मामले में एक डेफीनेट पालिसी बननी चाहिए कि कितना उत्पादन केन्द्र सरकार एफसीआई या अन्य एजेंसीज के माध्यम से परचेज़ करेगी वरना किसान को पता ही नहीं रहता। राज्य सरकार और केन्द्र सरकार के बीच में पत्राचार ही होता रहता है। परिणामस्वरूप मजबूर हो कर किसान को अपनी फसल बाजार में कम दाम पर बेचनी पड़ती है। माननीय मंत्री जी से मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या आप इस बारे में विचार करते हैं या करेंगे कि किसान को सही समय पर, सही प्राइस मिले, उसके लिए उसके उत्पादन का कितने परसेंट आप एफसीआई के माध्यम से खरीदेंगे?

श्री अजीत सिंह: माननीय सदस्य ने राजस्थान में बाजरे का जो सवाल उठाया है यह अवश्य ही चिंता का विषय है, क्योंकि उन्होंने कहा कि वहां पर लगातार दो-तीन साल अकाल जैसी सूखे की स्थिति रहने के बावजूद इस बार प्रोडक्शन अच्छा हुआ। असल में बाजरा नैफेड के द्वारा खरीदा जाता है, लेकिन नैफेड के पास कोई स्ट्रक्चर नहीं है कि वह हर जगह क्रय केन्द्र खोल सके और वह स्टेट की एजेंसीज़ पर ही डिपेंड करते हैं। राजफेड राजस्थान में खरीदता है। यह सही बात है कि एक लाख टन का जो लक्ष्य रखा गया था उससे भी बहुत कम खरीदारी हुई। माननीय सदस्य यह कह रहे हैं कि पहले से फिक्स होता है या नहीं कि कितना खरीदेंगे.....। प्रोडक्शन कितना हुआ, लोकल लेवल पर खपत कितनी हुई, प्रोड्यूसर कितना करेगा—यह उस के आधार पर होती है। अब ये चीजें हमेशा स्टेट गवर्नमेंट और सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट आपस में बातचीत कर के निपटाती हैं। यह चीजें फिक्स नहीं हैं, जैसा कि आपने खुद कहा कि 1 लाख टन था और फिर 3 लाख टन हो गया। तो जैसे वह मार्केट में आएगा तो उसे ज्यादा बढ़ाया जा

सकता है, इस में कोई ऐसी बात नहीं है। मान्यवर, जनरली एम०एस०पी० का मतलब यही है कि अगर प्रोड्यूसर को, फॉर्मर को मार्केट में प्राइस नहीं मिल रही है तो जितना भी वह सरकार को देगा उतना उस सरकार को खरीदना है। तो यह कोई फिक्स नहीं है कि सरकार इतना ही खरीद करेगी और उस से ज्यादा नहीं करेगी। यह जरूर हो सकता है कि उतना खरीदने के लिए उन के पास...(व्यवधान)...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: सर, मेरे प्रश्न का एक भाग यह था कि राज्य सरकार और केन्द्र सरकार के बीच में पत्राचार प्रारंभ हो जाता है तो फिर विषय का अंत नहीं होता और जब तक अंत होता है तब तक किसान मर लेता है। इसलिए इस मामले में पत्राचार की व्यवस्था को शीघ्र कैसे किया जा सकता है, यह भी एक मुद्दा है क्योंकि केवल पत्राचार से किसान को लाभ नहीं मिलने वाला है बल्कि तत्काल कार्यवाही होनी चाहिए।

श्री अजीत सिंह: माननीय सदस्य को मैं बताना चाहूंगा कि कुछ मुख्य मंत्री पत्राचार न कर के यहां मिल लेते हैं, कुछ डेरा डाल लेते हैं और कुछ पत्र लिख देते हैं तो जवाब आता रहता है। लेकिन जल्दी से जल्दी बात हो, यह दोनों साइड्स पर निर्भर है। किसानों के हित के बारे में उन को आपस में जल्दी बातचीत करके इस समस्या को सुलझाना चाहिए। लेकिन इस में कोई ऐसी बात नहीं है कि हम किसी को डायरेक्टिव दे सकें कि आप यहां आकर बैठिए और बातचीत कीजिए।

SHRI M.J. VARKEY MATTATHIL: Sir, I am very shocked to read the statement of the hon. Minister that the prices of rubber, agricultural products and cash crops are going up steadily. Sir, yesterday, the price of rubber was Rs.26/- a kilo. On 19th and 20, I sat on a hunger strike in front of Parliament House to draw the attention of the Government to this fact. Fortunately, the Chairman called me in his Chamber and gave me a chance to speak in the House. Now NAFED is prepared to procure Copra. But, where is the money? The Government of India must give money. There is no money. On 19th, the price of rubber was Rs.30/- a kilo and today the price is Rs. 26/- a kilo. I am a producer. I am a dealer. I make my living with rubber plantation. I would request the Minister to go through the facts and figures. The Minister is saying that they are procuring foodgrains. That is good. It needs to be done. The planters in Kerala have to wait for six years to get the produce, some profit out of a plantation. Coconut crop takes six years to give some produce. Rubber crop takes seven years to give some produce. We growers are investing so much money. In the case of rice and wheat,

it takes only three months. They are seasonal crops. Coconut is a permanent crop. The Government of India promised that if we grow cash crops to earn foreign exchange they will give up rice and foodgrains. Last year, for advance licences for factories and manufacturers, the Government had promised that the STC would procure rubber and supply it to them. But, the STC has not done anything so far. The manufacturers held a meeting yesterday. They requested the Government of India and the Government of Kerala to come to the rescue of the manufacturers as well as the growers. I am shocked to read the reply of the Minister. He is a responsible man. He is holding the charge of Agricuture. He is saying that the rubber price is going up. Today the price of rubber is only Rs. 26/- a kilo which is not enough even to pay to the labourers. We are paying Rs. 100/- per day to the workers. As Shri N.K. Premachandran and Shri Ramachandran Pillai have said, the Government must come forward to help the manufacturers and growers. The people of Kerala are dying. Yesterday, one family committed suicide. The male members are committing suicide because they cannot see their wives and children suffering. I warn the Government that I would again sit on a hunger strike. It is a question of life and death for the people of Kerala.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put your question.

SHRI M.J. VARKEY MATTATHIL: Will sufficient funds be given to NAFED to procure copra? And, if so, how much?

SHRI AJIT SINGH: I guess, we are all facing money problems, as the hon. Member has said. Firstly, I would like to say; I don't think the prices of agricultural produce are going up. This has been the case only in the case of rubber. As I said, there are indications that since may, 2001, there has been an upsurge...(*Interruptions*)... Please listen now.

And the Minimum Support Price for rubber has been fixed at Rs. 32.08 per kg...

SHRI M.J. VARKEY MATTATHIL: That is by the Supreme Court.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: By the STC, and the STC is purchasing it.

There were some complaints that the farmers were not getting that price. Now, the STC has authorised the co-operatives as well; the Government will also pay the handling charges so as to encourage the export of rubber. We are also assisting them, by giving them subsidy for the export of rubber. As far as NAFED is concerned, the hon. Member wanted to know when the purchase would start. As I mentioned earlier, the purchase has started in many States. Kerala had some problem when some societies went to the High Court, saying that they would buy from us and they wanted all the purchases to be stopped until then. So, as soon as this is settled, we will start purchasing it from Kerala.

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI: Sir, the first part of my supplementary to the hon. Minister, who is the champion of the farmers' cause, is this. We have the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission. But there are no representatives from the farmers in this Commission. Of course, the Minister is there. But the Minister is not represented in the Commission. So, will the hon. Minister see to it that representatives of the farmers are included in the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission? My second supplementary is this. In Karnataka, more than 60 farmers have committed suicide due to poverty, as there was nobody to purchase their produce, whenever it was taken to the market. They had to throw away all their produce. Moreover, most of the sugar mills have closed down and these mills have to pay arrears up to three years' of sugarcane prices to the farmers. Also, there is no sugar lying in the godowns of sugar factories. If the Government is not able to assist them, it should at least relax the rules and allow them free sale of sugar. With this money, they will not only be able to pay the farmers, but they can also lessen their burden of interest payable to the banks.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Sir, in the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission, there are three representatives of farmers. The recommendations of the ACPC are first sent for the approval of the Ministry and then they are put before the Cabinet. Apart from the cost of production, this Commission also takes the price disparity and other things into account. And, I don't think, of late, there have been any complaints regarding the MSP fixed on the labels. There

are, of course, complaints about procurement and all that. But there have been no complaints regarding the MSP. If the hon. Member has any suggestion as to how the Board should be constituted or how the prices are to be fixed, he is always welcome.

As regards sugar, the levy is only 15 per cent. The quota is fixed every month. Now, I think, the Ministry increases the quota every three months, in advance, so that it gives a lot of leeway to the sugar mills.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, as it appears, in the area of a large number of agricultural products where the Minimum Support Price scheme is operating, in practice, the Government does not have the adequate resources to back these schemes. So far as the Central Government is concerned, it has been pointed out that in the case of 25 major agricultural products, for which the Minimum Support Prices are being determined by the Goverment, the Government is not in a position to have adequate resources to make an effective dent on the market because the production is much more than what the market can absorb. And this is not the problem in one year; these problems are taking place repeatedly. Therefore, may I know from the hon. Minister, why at the beginning of the production season—since the Government has a firm idea about the absorption capacity of the market, the requirements of capacity, the export potentialities and so on—the farmers are not adequately educated that the market can absorb at this particular level? Therefore, there should be some control over production so that farmers are not faced with a situation where they are forced to sell their commodities at throwaway prices. Sometimes it happens in the case of potato and sometimes in the case of onion. This is taking place even in the case of jute; a large number of cash crops are covered by that. Therefore, what is needed is to keep them informed about the absorption capacity of the market. And with the advance of technology, specially in the area of information, why cannot this be done? I am not giving this suggestion for the first time. A large number of Members have given these suggestions umpteen number of times. But why can't we act on this?

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Sir, the Government is aware, as the hon.

Members are also aware, that this problem is there and that diversification is needed. In this year's Kharif prices, we increased the coarse grains' prices much more than we did for paddy up to 10 per cent and we tried to promote horticulture and other things. But it is not so easy to shift. If you tell the farmer that next year wheat production is going to be so much, it will not be easy for him to shift. As the hon. Member from Kerala pointed out, it takes six years in the case of coconut and rubber. In the same way, we can tell the farmer to take up horticulture, production of vegetables, production of flowers and so on. But we have to provide the infrastructure. He has to be provided all the inputs, as also the infrastructure, so that he can sell what he produces.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: But that is the job of the Government. The Government is meant for that.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Yes. Your suggestion is in Government's mind. We are working on it. We are working on horticulture. We want to promote it. More money is being provided for upgrading the *mandis*, for more godowns, for having more refrigerated godowns. It takes time because farmers have to be prepared. We can tell him that that is where the market is. But he has to consider whether he can get his produce there or what means are there. So, it is a very big question. It is not just that we tell him that this year wheat is going to be ten per cent more and then we expect that the farmer grows ten per cent less wheat. Now, so far as coconut is concerned, every farmer knows. We do not have to educate him. He knows that the prices of rubber and coconut are going down, not just for one year, but for five or six years. This problem is there. So, we have to provide him an alternative, and the infrastructure, the inputs and so on. Now, you are saying this about the market absorption and so on. The farmer also has to know that in the long-term, he will not be facing that problem. Again, in two years' time he shifts to something and then again there is over production there; it is a very big problem. We are aware of it and we are promoting many schemes for diversification.

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in Tamil Nadu

the price of tea has fallen below the Minimum Support Price. The tea growers in Tamil Nadu are suffering very much due to the shortfall in prices. In order to save the tea growers, the State is now procuring tea from the farmers and selling it to people through PDS. In this process, the State Government is incurring losses. I would like to know whether the Government of India would come forward to compensate the losses suffered by the State Government in this process.

SHRI AJIT SINGH: Sir, the Government of Tamil Nadu has to be complimented for taking care of the tea growers, in that sense. But I do hope that they have considered the fact that they have enough resources to do it. I don't know whether your Government has put forward the proposal before the Centre or not, but the point is, every State, whatever they are going to encourage the farmers, the overall financial situation has to be considered before the State Government does anything in this case.

Policy for Writing Text Books

*82. SHRI JIBON ROY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Sunday Times of 28th October, 2001, under the caption, "NCERT set to rewrite unity in diversity"; and

(b) Whether Government would announce a transparent policy on syllabus making and the names who are selected for writing text books?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Curriculum development and preparation of syllabus are among the main activities of NCERT, which is an ongoing process. Based on the syllabus, subject-wise Advisory Committees are set up to examine the content and prepare guidelines for writing text-books. As per the long standing practice in NCERT, the draft text-books are